

CALIFORNIA CRITIC



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San Francisco

Gaylord

Subtle Fare of Northern India

Cosmopolitan San Franciscans have been denied one of the world's most interesting cuisines—the delicately spiced foods of Northern India. But now Gaylord has arrived in Ghirardelli Square from New Delhi—by way of London and Chicago—to bring us this exquisite fare.

Gaylord is to the typical Indian restaurant what the Mandarin is to a chop suey house. If you think of Indian food as only variations of fiery "curry," think again. (In India there is no "curry"; the word probably is an Anglicization of a hot and sour yogurt soup called "khadi.") At Gaylord, as in India, each dish is individually seasoned with a subtle and appropriate blend of spices. No two taste quite alike.

The specialty of Gaylord is the tandoori cooking of the northern state of Punjab. And as you enter you see the tandoori ovens brought from India. These are deep clay-lined pits containing white-hot charcoal over which long-marinated meats and poultry are quickly cooked to seal in the flavors and juices.

From its third-floor perch, Gaylord's large windows overlook Ghirardelli Square and the bay beyond. The dining room is subdued elegance, decorated in muted shades of brown and pink with floor-to-ceiling white

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Hollywood

Thai Taste

A Trio of Restaurants

If your palate is bored, hie yourself down to your local Thai restaurant for some exotic tastes that will revive both your taste buds and your spirit. Perhaps you've shied away, hearing the food is horrendously hot. It can be, and the Thais eat it that way. But the local restaurateurs that curry your favor offer both mild and hot dishes. Their menus and their staff make a careful distinction so that you can order with the piquancy you like.

Thai cuisine has come to us rather quickly, with the increase in recent years of Thai residents to about 20,000 in Southern California and 6,000 in Northern California. San Francisco has several Thai restaurants, but the Los Angeles area has 50 to choose from. Among these there are some that cater pretty much to American tastes, some with a considerable Chinese influence, and some that have, as the Thais say, "true Thai taste." I discuss one of each kind here, after a little background that may enhance your enjoyment.

The frequently used ingredients of Thai cuisine include rice, chicken, pork, beef, shrimp, squid, various noodles, coconut, curry blends, chilies, onions, coriander, many familiar and unfamiliar herbs and spices, and a bounty of exotic fruits. Locally, we can

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linen drapes and some strategically placed large palms. Tables are appealingly set with pink cloths and sparkling silver. An interesting collection of Indian paintings adorns the walls.

Gaylord's menu contains an astounding array of 50 dishes and side dishes, plus seven kinds of roti, Indian breads. To help the confused novice, there are three complete dinners, offering a broad spectrum of dishes. On our first visit our party of four was able to sample 30 items from the menu by ordering the three dinners and a few a la carte dishes. We were afraid we were overtaxing the kitchen, but this gargantuan feast arrived hot, each dish redolent with its own distinctive seasoning, all efficiently served from silver platters. Total cost (food only) was \$36.80. But the multiplicity of dishes was almost overwhelming.

A more selective and more civilized way to order here is from the a la carte menu, sharing the dishes Chinese style. For a party of four you might start with one or two orders of assorted hors d'oeuvre (\$2.50): samosas (deep-fried dough crescents filled with a spicy vegetable mixture), pakora (vegetables deep-fried in seasoned batter), grilled chicken tikka, and papadum (a deep-fried, ultra-light, crispy wafer). These are accompanied by an extraordinary mint and yogurt sauce flavored with hot green peppers, garlic and coriander.

A soup course is not traditional in India, and especially mulligatawny, which was actually an invention of the British colonials. Still, I wouldn't pass by Gaylord's rendition of mulligatawny (\$1.25), a light chicken and lentil broth, bursting with a symphony of perfectly orchestrated flavors. Truly one of the highlights of dining here. Gaylord also serves as a soup, a thin lentil dal, spiced with black pepper and coriander. There is a tomato soup, too, which is bland in comparison to the others.

For main dishes to be shared by four, I recommend the chicken tandoori plus a lamb, a prawn and a vegetable dish. A full serving of tandoori chicken (\$6.50) contains four pieces of chicken which have been marinated in yogurt with paprika, garlic, coriander and

cumin, then skewered and broiled over charcoal in the tandoori oven. Succulent and superb.

My choice for lamb would be the pasanda (\$4.90), boneless, flavorful lamb cooked in a most unusual cream sauce, mildly seasoned with cumin and nuts. A lovely contrast to the hotter dishes. Or you may wish to try another tandoori specialty, like the delicious seekh kabab (\$4.50), barbecued patties of minced lamb combined with hot peppers and green onions. We enjoyed this more than the lamb sagwala, which is cooked with creamed spinach, which tasted "tinny," as if from a steam table or can.

For a peppery dish you might select the prawns bhuna (\$5.50), cooked in a hot tomato and pepper sauce, or the prawns chili masala (\$5.50), prepared with green peppers, onions and a piquant blend of spices. For vegetables, we particularly enjoyed the matter paneer (\$2.75), a mixture of green peas and cubes of paneer (the soft Indian cheese which looks somewhat like the Japanese tofu), sauced with tomatoes and a melange of spices. Also recommended is the bengan bhartha (\$2.75), eggplant cooked with tomatoes and mildly spiced with coriander, cumin and tumeric. A platter of Kashmiri pillau (\$2.75), saffron rice cooked with peas and nuts, will round out your dinner nicely.

No Indian dinner is complete without a sampling of the side dishes which so characterize this cuisine. With the above main dishes you will be served a green chutney of onions and ginger pickles. I also recommend an order of raita (\$1.75), a refreshing mixture of cucumbers and tomatoes in mint-flavored yogurt. And for a much-needed tartness with all this rich food, order several bowls of kachumber salad (50 cents each), crispy bits of cucumber and other vegetables in a vinegar dressing.

An assortment of Gaylord's superb Indian breads is also a must to accompany your meal. I particularly liked the kulcha, which is nan (the traditional flat bread much like the Arab pita), stuffed with onions and baked in the tandoori ovens. The desserts we tried were cloyingly sweet; I would skip them next time.

Service at Gaylord, considering it had been open only a month before our review, was generally good. We had to wait an eternity for our order to be taken, but after that the food arrived quickly and the waiters were attentive and informative. The wine list was very limited, but we were told it is being expanded. Other signs of newness include a Pimm's cup served in a glass mug, waiting arrival of the traditional pewter.

One of the greatest surprises of dining at Gaylord is to learn that it is actually part of a franchised chain with a "formula" menu. The original Gaylord started in New Delhi in the late 1940's and now there are branches in Bombay, London, Kobe, Hong Kong and Bangkok. Gaylord first came to the United States with the Indian Pavilion at the 1964 World's Fair and later opened its first American branch in Chicago, then New York, now San Francisco and next Los Angeles, later this year.



SIFARISH-E-KHAS CHEF'S SPECIAL COMPLETE DINNERS		
MAHARAJA SPECIAL	Choice of Soup Tandoori Chicken Boondi Kabob Nan Lamb Pasanda Curried Vegetables Choice of Dessert Tea or Coffee	18.95
MAHARANI SPECIAL	Choice of Soup Chicken Korma Navrattan Vegetables Onion Kulcha Choice of Dessert Tea or Coffee	8.95
SPECIAL VEGETARIAN THALI	Dal Soup Matter Paneer Dai Mahani Papadum Two Pooris Selection of Dessert from Trolley Tea or Coffee	7.90

The manager of "our" Gaylord was trained in India, London and Chicago; the chefs were trained in Gaylord's Indian kitchens; the waiters are mostly Indian students at local colleges. But Gaylord is a rare exception to the usual mediocrity found in chain restaurants. The food is excitement in dining, indeed.—J.K.
GAYLORD INDIA RESTAURANT, Ghirardelli Square, San Francisco. Telephone: 771-8822. Hours: 11-3, 6-11, daily. Cards: AE, BA, MC. Full bar service.

Thai Taste: Continued from Page One

provide bananas, pineapples, melons and guavas. But, rarely if ever do we see fresh durians, pomelos, rambutans, mangosteens or rakam. Some of these are imported, canned or preserved, to the local Thai markets, as are baby corn, prepared sauces, curry powder, Thai beer and a variety of Chinese-style noodles and other ingredients made in Thailand.

A Thai meal would typically consist of a soup, a curry, steamed rice, a boiled vegetable and its sauce, and perhaps a salad and other side dishes, served family style and all at once. Here are some specific dishes you can find served a la carte in Los Angeles with their usual names.

- **Soups** (*kaeng chud*). Hot and sour soup (*tom yam*), usually shrimp or chicken, and a coconut-milk base which helps as relief from hot dishes. *Yen ta fo*, a broth with noodles, fishcake, and perhaps squid and greens. Other coconut-base soups, often with a lemony flavor.
- **Curries** Most have coconut-milk base, various meats. *Mussaman*, beef curry, somewhat mild. Yellow curry (*kaeng kari*), most like an Indian curry, somewhat hot. Red curry (*kaeng phed*), red from chilies, hotter. Green curry (*kaen keao wan*), hottest!
- **Vegetable** Might be simply squash or peas, but not seen here a la carte.
- **Salad** (*yam*) *Yam yai*, mixture of greens, meats, hard boiled egg.

- **Noodles** *Mee krob*, crispy rice noodles, coated with a sweetened, caramelized meat sauce, with shrimp and pork or chicken; popular.

- **Bar-b-q chicken** Authentically Thai, can be very good.

- **Side dishes** Fried fish patties (*taut mun*) with cucumber sauce. Many others, including dishes accepted into Thai cuisine, such as beef or pork sate with peanut sauce, and Chinese stir-fry combinations.

- **Condiments on the table** *Nam pla*, brown salty sauce from fermented fish; try this, it's interesting and description fits ancient Roman seasoning, liquamen!). Various chilies, dry and in solution; proceed with respect.

- **Desserts** Potentially a large variety of exotic, interesting tastes, but each restaurant has few desserts. Fresh or pureed fruits would be typical, but are seldom offered here. Puddings and custards are often made elsewhere; best of these I tried was custard and sweet rice steamed with coconut milk and jasmine essence. Canned or preserved Thai fruits are offered, but can be disappointing. Ice creams might be coconut, ginger, or even corn.

- **Beverages** Tea is the traditional beverage. Thai iced tea or coffee is served with cream and sugar. Thai lager beer, *Amarit*, is good; has character, like Mexican beer. Beer rather than wine recommended with this spicy cuisine.

When ordering a la carte dishes you may experience some language difficulty, so don't hesitate to point to your menu. A question about a dish can sometimes be taken as an order, so you may want to have your order read back to you. Menus of restaurants reviewed here identify spicy hot dishes, and the help should be well aware of this concern. They all serve a la carte dishes family style, and generally as soon as they come from the kitchen. Thais use a fork and spoon. You can spoon some rice onto your plate, and then serve the other dishes around it, mixing with rice as you wish.

The restaurants below all offer dinners, but these include Chinese dishes. If you want to experience something close to a traditional Thai meal, here is a recommendation for a party of four, family style, at either Tepparod Thai or Chao Praya, for under \$4 per person.

Mee krob, crispy rice noodles

Yam, Salad

(*Kaeng*) *Tom yam*, hot and sour shrimp soup

Thai bar-b-q chicken

Mussaman, or other curry, beef or pork

Khao, steamed rice

TEPPAROD THAI

This fourth Tepparod branch is located near the Farmer's Market. The interior is well lit and rather plain, with Japanese-style screens for the upper walls. A gift shop is adjacent. The menu here is very similar to that of the Tepparod Thai No. 1 (*Best Restaurants*) on

Spécialités de la Maison



California

By Caroline Bates

Gaylord (India) Restaurant, Mama's, Bogart's—A Shellfish Bar

San Francisco

FOR CENTURIES India has had a pharmacopoeia of spices passed down from early Sanskrit writings and a tradition of cookery whose character was shaped by the country's wealth of spice-bearing plants. Indian cooks combine spices as painters mix colors, striving for the proper proportion, balance, and nuances of tone and grinding different mixtures, or *masalas*, for every dish. Insofar as any generalizations can be made about a country of such diverse traditions, peoples, and climates, Indian cooking owes its distinctive character to the refined use of spices rather than to any particular cooking method. An exception might be made of the *tandoor*, the urn-shaped clay oven in use in northwestern India and Pakistan, in which meats marinated in yogurt and spices are seared by radiant charcoal heat. Yet even *tandoori* meats derive a large measure of their flavor from the individuality of their *masalas*. In any event, an opportunity to sample the sophisticated spicing of fine Indian food is provided by GAYLORD (INDIA) RESTAURANT, which is located at 900 North Point. It is an exciting newcomer to the roster

of eating places in Ghirardelli Square.

The Ghirardelli Square restaurant is the latest in a long line of Gaylords that originated in New Delhi in 1942 and expanded to Bombay, London, Bangkok, Chicago, and New York, to mention just a few of the more than a dozen localities. Although there is a parent corporation, each restaurant is separately owned (Kishore Kripalani is the man in charge in San Francisco) and individually designed and in no way carries the negative connotations implicit in the word "chain." The "gay lord" referred to in the restaurant's name is the sun-loving Lord Krishna, a major Hindu deity, who is the subject of a bronze statue and several exquisite paintings from ancient miniatures in the Ghirardelli Square restaurant. These art pieces in combination with a dusky rose and black color scheme, an effective arrangement of space punctuated by several tall potted palms, and Indian music playing softly in the background add up to a serenely beautiful and romantic dining room, whose charm is certainly not diminished by windows framing seascapes of San Francisco Bay.

Off to one side of the dining room is a

glassed-in *tandoori* room equipped with two large *tandoors* sunk in a heavily insulated counter. Sealed off from interested spectators rather like a rare acquisition at the zoo, the *tandoori* chef, Nanak Chand, slaps balls of dough onto the inside walls of the *tandoor* and thrusts long hooked rods skewered with saffron-hued chickens upright in the charcoal depths, where temperatures reach seven hundred degrees. The dough sticks to the oven wall and spreads and puffs in minutes to form *nan* and *paratha*, two characteristically northern Indian breads. Their flavor and texture, derived from high heat, charcoal, and clay, simply can't be duplicated by any other means, as I know well, having tried to bake comparable breads in a conventional oven. The meats cook rapidly and bear careful watching: one reason they don't emerge charred is the marinating, which has a tenderizing and moisturizing effect.

Chicken, lamb, shrimp, and fish such as rock cod are all cooked in the *tandoor*. Tasting subtly of smoke and clay and rather more strongly of its spicy yogurt-based marinade, the chicken is a standout, although the white meat has a

tendency to dry out in the *tandoor's* fierce heat. Dryness seems to be no problem with the *tandoori* lamb, notably succulent on the two occasions that I had it. The superb *boti kebab* with meticulously trimmed chunks of lamb and slices of green pepper resembles a Near Eastern shish kebab but doesn't taste like one. Instead, it is redolent of a peppery *masala* compounded partly of chili powder, coriander, and cloves. *Seekh kebab*, the most interesting *tandoori* offering to my taste, is made with minced lamb and onions, coriander, and green chilies molded around a skewer to form long sausage shapes. Of special interest are the *tandoori* breads, starting with basic *nan*—round, puffy, and leavened with baking powder and soda—and proceeding to the delicious *kheema nan* filled with minced lamb and onions and cashew nuts and to onion *kulcha*, another *nan* piquantly flavored with onion, coriander, and green pepper. Whole-wheat *paratha* is a flaky, unleavened bread that reminds me a little of a scone and tastes splendid hot from the *tandoor*. The version called *aloo paratha* features a spicy filling of potatoes and peas. The only bread not baked in the *tandoor* is deep-fried *poori*.

Besides the *tandoori* meats, Gaylord offers a rich assortment of curried lamb, chicken, and vegetable dishes and three *biryani*, the princely Mogul pilafs of saffron rice. Several of these made up the main events of a recent dinner for four that, from its spicy beginning to its sweet finale, provided visual and gastronomic excitement of a high order. We began with a selection of Indian hors d'oeuvres, including *samosas*, turnovers enclosing tomatoes, potatoes, and peas; deep-fried *pakoras* made of chick-pea flour and filled with vegetables such as cauliflower and eggplant; and marinated pieces of chicken cooked in the *tandoor*. They were all enhanced by a lively yogurt, mint, and coriander sauce along with sweet mango chutney. (On request the waiter will bring an incendiary red pepper chutney and a mango pickle.) Our favorite first course, however, was chicken *chaat*, comprising cold chunks of meat on shredded lettuce that looked utterly innocent and tasted hotter than Tophet, thanks to a special *chaat masala* made from tamarind, mango powder,

and myriad spices. By contrast, the soups that followed—mulligatawny and a fine, peppery *dal* of puréed lentils—seemed mild-mannered.

I don't know how Indians rate the skills of Gaylord's curry chef, Walayati Ram, but his dishes elicited repeated expressions of pleasure from one guest, a fellow ordinarily parsimonious with praise. My own notes on the dinner seem to be punctuated with an extravagance of exclamation marks. I'd be hard put to pick a favorite between *roghan josh*, featuring chunks of lamb browned with onions and then braised to tenderness with yogurt and an intricate *masala*, and lamb *pasanda*, cooked in cream, milk, and yogurt with cashew nuts and a *masala* of cardamom, cloves, and coriander. Both were exceptional, completely different, and considerably more intricate than their abbreviated list of ingredients suggests. (An equally ingratiating chicken *pasanda*, sampled on a previous occasion, also came with a cashew sauce.)

Curried dishes selected from the vegetarian section of the menu were just as impressive. (I think it was the writer Santha Rama Rau who observed that Westerners tend to judge the success of a vegetarian dish by its verisimilitude to meat, whereas in India, where vegetarianism is basic to a reverence for life, the vegetable is respected for itself.) *Bhindi masala* is okra masterfully stir-fried with spices; and *paneer korma* combines sautéed cubes of a homemade cheese similar to farmer cheese with a thick yogurt sauce enriched with tomato, almonds, and cashew nuts. Cashew nuts and almonds also stud a rich saffron-tinted pilaf of lamb. As palate-soothing asides we ordered a tart *kachumbar* salad of tomato, cucumber, and onion and a cooling cucumber and yogurt *raita* with mint.

The surprises among the succession of exquisite dishes arrived at the end with Gaylord's dessert trolley, certainly the most unusual in town. It was arrayed with little plates of spongy *rasgulla* resembling pearl balls and with squares and diamonds of *barfi* colored in delicate pastels and looking for all the world like the contents of a Christmas divinity fudge box. *Barfi*, in fact, are a kind of candy of cooked milk and cream

flavored with pistachio, coconut, or almond and chocolate and richly overlaid with edible silver leaf. *Rasgulla*, a specialty of Gaylord's talented dessert chef, Krishin Lal, are light little balls of cheese and farina in a sweet syrup. Other desserts frequently available are *ras malai*, sweet, nutty cheese balls in a creamy sauce; deep-fried *gulab jaman*, another variety of cheese ball; *kulfi*, the lovely Indian ice cream; and *jalebi*, deep-fried pretzel-shaped sweets dipped in rosewater syrup. All the desserts taste intensely sweet by American standards, but in the context of an Indian feast the milk-based confections provide the necessary sweet mouthful after a complexity of spices and hot sensations. I, at any rate, find them irresistible.

Gaylord is open daily for lunch from 11 A.M. until 3 P.M. and for dinner between 6 and 11 P.M. In addition to the full menu at lunch, there are special luncheon combinations (lamb *masala*, mixed vegetables, and *nan* is one) modestly priced under \$5. The regular à la carte menu is also very reasonable with most entrées priced under \$6.50 (vegetarian dishes are less) and first courses, side dishes, breads, and desserts ranging from 50 cents to \$2.50. A trio of extraordinary table d'hôte dinners presents a panoply of Gaylord specialties. The Maharaja, the most lavish at \$11.50, begins with a soup and proceeds to five *tandoori* offerings, two curried dishes, a saffron pilaf, dessert, and tea or coffee. To drink, there are tropical rum- and gin-based concoctions, including a Pimm's Cup, as well as more conventional cocktails. The wine list is pedestrian, but beers and stouts—more compatible with Indian food—are well represented. However, my first choice would be the nonalcoholic salted *lassi*, a breakfast yogurt drink in India but an agreeable dinner drink as well. Reservations aren't always necessary, but it's prudent to play safe. The number to call is 771-8822.

Mama's

If I were to introduce a European visitor in San Francisco to a genuinely original American restaurant representing the best that the country has to offer, my choice unhesitatingly would be Mama's, one of my—and everyone

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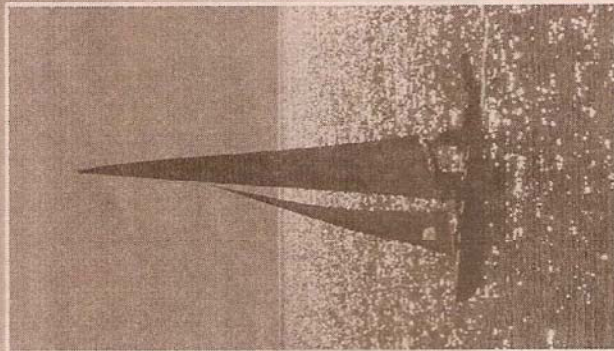
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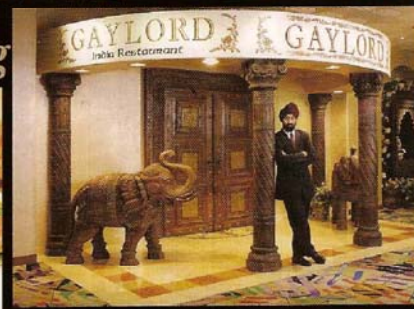
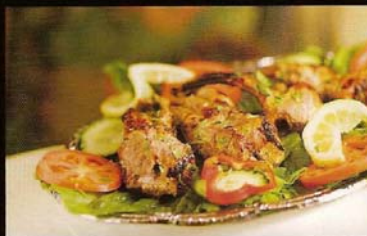


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